

**TITLE 610. STATE REGENTS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION
CHAPTER 25. STUDENT FINANCIAL AID AND SCHOLARSHIPS**

RULEMAKING ACTION:

EMERGENCY adoption

RULES:

Subchapter 41. Oklahoma Future Teacher Scholarship and Employment Incentive Program ("Inspired to Teach") [NEW]

610:25-41-1. Purpose [NEW]

610:25-41-2. Definitions [NEW]

610:25-41-3. Eligibility requirements [NEW]

610:25-41-4. Application procedure [NEW]

610:25-41-5. Certifications of compliance [NEW]

610:25-41-6. Disqualification [NEW]

610:25-41-7. Participant eligibility for scholarship payments [NEW]

610:25-41-8. Participant eligibility for employment incentive payments [NEW]

610:25-41-9. Incentive benefits to be disbursed under the program [NEW]

610:25-41-10. Fiscal limitations of the program [NEW]

610:25-41-11. Verification and notification requirements [NEW]

AUTHORITY:

Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education; 70 O.S. §§ 698.1 and 3206

ADOPTION:

September 8, 2022

EFFECTIVE:

Immediately upon Governor's approval

EXPIRATION:

Effective through September 14, 2023, unless superseded by another rule or disapproved by the Legislature

SUPERSEDED EMERGENCY ACTIONS:

N/A

INCORPORATIONS BY REFERENCE:

N/A

FINDING OF EMERGENCY:

The State Regents for Higher Education find that a compelling public interest requires the passage of these emergency rules. These emergency rules are necessary to comply with 70 O.S. § 698.1. In the absence of emergency rules, the earliest the permanent rule process could be complete is September 14, 2023. The emergency rules will provide temporary guidance to OSRHE staff, institutions of higher education and prospective and enrolled students until such time as the permanent rule process – which will include public comment and potentially a public hearing – is complete.

Title 70, Section 698.1 states that "[the] Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education shall establish and maintain an incentive scholarship program and teacher employment incentive program, as funding is available..." As funding is currently available, Section 698.1 requires OSRHE to establish this program. Allowing a delay in establishing this program until September 14, 2023 could create a "violation of...state law" or create "serious prejudice to the public interest." 75 O.S. § 253(A)(1)(c) & (e). These are both outcomes that the emergency rule provisions of 75 O.S. § 253 allow OSRHE to prevent.

GIST/ANALYSIS:

The Oklahoma Future Teacher Scholarship and Employment Incentive Program ("Inspired to Teach") is a program to support the teacher pipeline and the preparation of public-school teachers for prekindergarten through 12th grade. As legislatively appropriated funding is available, the Program provides a scholarship to eligible students majoring in teacher education at an accredited teacher preparation program at an Oklahoma public or private university OR a student majoring in a pre-teacher education

program at an Oklahoma public community college that has an approved "Inspired to Teach" Program articulation agreement with an accredited Oklahoma university teacher preparation program, and incentivizes those individuals to enter the workforce as Oklahoma public school teachers for at least five (5) consecutive years upon graduation.

CONTACT PERSON:

Chris Turner Jr., Associate General Counsel, OSRHE, 655 Research Parkway, Suite 200, Oklahoma City, OK 73104, 405-225-9289, cturner@osrhe.edu.

PURSUANT TO THE ACTIONS DESCRIBED HEREIN, THE FOLLOWING EMERGENCY RULES ARE CONSIDERED PROMULGATED AND EFFECTIVE UPON APPROVAL BY THE GOVERNOR AS SET FORTH IN 75 O.S., SECTION 253(F):

SUBCHAPTER 41. OKLAHOMA FUTURE TEACHER SCHOLARSHIP AND EMPLOYMENT INCENTIVE PROGRAM ("INSPIRED TO TEACH")

610:25-41-1. Purpose

(a) The Oklahoma Future Teacher Scholarship and Employment Incentive Program (also known as "Inspired to Teach") was created by House Bill 3564 during the 2022 legislative session.

(b) "Inspired to Teach" is a program to support the teacher pipeline and the preparation of public school teachers for prekindergarten through 12th grade. As legislatively appropriated funding is available, the Program provides a scholarship to eligible students majoring in teacher education at an accredited teacher preparation program at an Oklahoma public or private university OR a student majoring in a pre-teacher education program at an Oklahoma public community college that has an approved "Inspired to Teach" Program articulation agreement with an accredited Oklahoma university teacher preparation program, and incentivizes those individuals to enter the workforce as Oklahoma public school teachers for at least five (5) consecutive years upon graduation.

(c) The bill requires that the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education (OSRHE) establish and maintain an incentive scholarship program and teacher employment incentive program, as funding is available. [70 O.S §698.1 (A)].

(d) The purpose of this program is to address teacher shortages in Oklahoma by making scholarships available to undergraduate students and providing employment incentives for participants who meet eligibility criteria and major in teacher education, obtain a traditional teaching certificate, and serve as teachers in the public schools of this state for at least five (5) years.

(e) The scholarship will help defray the cost of obtaining a baccalaureate degree and the incentive will assist graduates as they enter the workforce as teachers in this state.

610:25-41-2. Definitions

The following words and terms, when used in this Subchapter, shall have the following meaning, unless the context clearly indicates otherwise:

"Full-time student" means:

(A) an undergraduate student enrolled in 12 or more semester credits toward teacher education degree requirements;

(B) an undergraduate student who is a teacher education major enrolled in an internship or student teaching credit hours in order to complete their degree program prior to certification and who has been approved to take less than twelve credit hours; or

(C) an undergraduate student who is a teacher education major with an approved reasonable accommodation from Student Accessibility Services at the institution due to a documented disability and who has been approved to take less than twelve credit hours.

"Inspired to Teach" means the Oklahoma Future Teacher Scholarship and Employment Incentive Program created by House Bill 3564 during the 2022 legislative session.

"Internship" or "Student teaching" means: A minimum of 12 weeks or 360 hours of full-time student teaching or its equivalent completed by all initial candidates prior to program completion. The student teaching internship must be completed in an accredited Oklahoma PK-12 school to fulfill the mandatory requirement for a teacher education degree at an accredited Oklahoma institution.

"OSRHE" means the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education.

"SAP" means satisfactory academic progress according to the standards of the Oklahoma educational institution in which the student is enrolled.

610:25-41-3. Eligibility requirements

(a) In order to participate in the "Inspired to Teach" program and be eligible for a scholarship, prospective teachers must meet the following requirements:

(1) Graduate from an Oklahoma high school;

(2) Meet higher education admission standards at 1) a public or private Oklahoma university with an accredited Oklahoma teacher education program or 2) a public community college with an approved articulation agreement with an accredited Oklahoma university teacher education program;

(3) Declare a major at an accredited Oklahoma university teacher education program in a degree leading to a standard teaching certificate or declare a major at a community college with an approved "Inspired to Teach" Program articulation agreement with an accredited Oklahoma teacher education program leading to a standard Oklahoma teaching certificate;

(4) Maintain enrollment as a full-time student at a participating higher education institution during each semester of scholarship eligibility until a baccalaureate degree for teaching is obtained;

(5) Maintain SAP and a minimum 2.5 GPA throughout matriculation; and

(6) Prior to entry into the "Inspired to Teach" Program, agree to complete the program and to teach in an Oklahoma public prekindergarten through 12th grade (PK-12) school for a minimum of five (5) consecutive years upon graduation and certification as a teacher.

(b) Traditionally certified teachers who graduated from a teacher education program without participating in the "Inspired to Teach" program during undergraduate study are not eligible for the "Inspired to Teach" program.

610:25-41-4. Application procedure

(a) OSRHE will distribute "Inspired to Teach" Participation Agreement forms to postsecondary institutions in Oklahoma that are eligible to participate in state and federal financial aid programs and have an approved program of professional teacher preparation or an approved articulation agreement on file with a state institution that has a professional teacher preparation program.

(b) Participation Agreement forms may be obtained from the "Inspired to Teach" coordinator at each postsecondary institution or from OSRHE.

(c) A Participation Agreement must be signed by the student while enrolled in a major course of study in teacher education at the undergraduate level.

(d) The completed Participation Agreement must be submitted to the "Inspired to Teach" coordinator upon declaring teacher education as a major or, at the latest, before beginning the final semester prior to graduation; however, a student who has declared teacher education as a major at least one semester before the final semester will be allowed to submit a completed Participation Agreement and be considered for the "Inspired to Teach" Program the final semester.

(e) "Inspired to Teach" coordinators at postsecondary institutions will submit copies of the Participation Agreements to OSRHE within 10 days of submission by the student.

(f) OSRHE will notify each applicant of the receipt of his/her application to the program, the requirements for ongoing eligibility, and the disbursement benefits under "Inspired to Teach."

610:25-41-5. Certifications of compliance

- (a) Participants must apply for entry into the "Inspired to Teach" program during their matriculation as an undergraduate student using the Participation Agreement Form which can be obtained from the eligible Oklahoma higher education institution in which they are enrolled or the OSRHE website.
- (b) OSRHE will be responsible for determining participant eligibility at each stage following program entry.
- (c) Institutions will supply OSRHE with verification and certification of student eligibility each semester for the "Inspired to Teach" Program scholarship.
- (d) After graduation, as participants transition to their teaching assignments in Oklahoma public schools, "Inspired to Teach" Program participants will provide compliance documentation to OSRHE as set forth in 610:25-41-9 and 610:25-41-11.

610:25-41-6. Disqualification

The following conditions shall subject the participant to disqualification from the "Inspired to Teach" Program:

- (A) Failing to maintain a 2.5 grade point average;
- (B) Changing major to an ineligible area of study;
- (C) Failing to meet and maintain SAP in an academic program leading to an eligible undergraduate degree in an Oklahoma accredited teacher education program;
- (D) Failing to maintain enrollment as a full-time student, withdrawing, or otherwise leaving the higher education institution;
- (E) Failing to complete the teacher education baccalaureate degree and training necessary to obtain a traditional Oklahoma teaching certificate from an approved and accredited Oklahoma program of professional teacher preparation, including student teaching or internship;
- (F) Failing to meet requirements for traditional certification to teach as established by Oklahoma state law;
- (G) Failing to teach for five (5) consecutive years in an Oklahoma public school upon graduation and certification as a teacher; or
- (H) Failing to provide documentation as requested by OSRHE within the time indicated.

610:25-41-7. Participant eligibility for scholarship payments

(a) To the extent legislatively appropriated funding is available, the following scholarships will be awarded to eligible participants in the "Inspired to Teach" program:

- (1) One thousand dollars (\$1,000) per academic year for up to three (3) academic years for full-time students who have earned less than 90 credit hours; and
- (2) Two thousand five hundred dollars (\$2,500) for the final academic year for full-time students who have earned 90 or more credit hours.

(b) To the extent legislatively appropriated funding is available, the following scholarships will be awarded to eligible full-time students participating in "Inspired to Teach" according to the following tiers based on enrolled credit hours towards degree requirements if the student is entering the first year of undergraduate study, or earned credit hours towards degree requirements for all other students:

- (1) Tier 1, requiring a minimum of 12 hours enrolled: \$1,000
- (2) Tier 2, requiring a minimum of 24 and a maximum of 47 hours earned: \$1,000
- (3) Tier 3, requiring a minimum of 48 and a maximum of 89 hours earned: \$1,000
- (4) Tier 4, requiring a minimum of 90 hours earned: \$2,500

(c) Participants can receive a maximum of Five Thousand Five Hundred Dollars (\$5,500) in total scholarship awards. Students will not be eligible for multiple awards in an academic year. Scholarship award disbursements will only be made for fall and spring semesters of the academic year. There will be no summer semester scholarship disbursements.

(d) Participants who have earned less than ninety (90) credit hours towards degree requirements, but have received Three Thousand Dollars (\$3,000) in scholarship funding, will not be eligible for the final

scholarship allotment of Two Thousand Five Hundred Dollars (\$2,500) until their final academic year of study.

(e) Participants who have earned 90 or more credit hours towards degree requirements but still have more than one academic year remaining to complete the teacher education degree requirements, may receive the Two Thousand Five Hundred Dollar (\$2,500) award in the final academic year during a semester (fall and/or spring disbursement) designated by, and at the discretion of, the institution. Participants, upon receiving the Two Thousand Five Hundred Dollar (\$2,500) award, will not be eligible for any of the scholarship awards granted to participants who have earned less than 90 credit hours towards degree requirements.

(f) Participants may utilize no more than one of the following provisions to become re-eligible for the "Inspired to Teach" program:

(1) Participants whose GPA falls below a 2.5, or who fail to maintain SAP, will have one academic semester (fall or spring) to re-establish a 2.5 GPA (or above) and SAP in order to have the scholarship benefit reinstated. Failure to meet the GPA and/or SAP requirements will result in the participant's withdrawal from the program.

(2) Participants who change majors to an ineligible area of study, fail to meet GPA and/or SAP requirements for two semesters, or withdraw from the program altogether, will be allowed to reapply within one year of that occurrence as long as the participant does not graduate the same semester in which the participant reapplies.

(3) Participants who fail to meet the GPA or SAP requirement during the 2nd to last semester of their final year of matriculation, will not receive the scholarship benefit in the final semester; however, under the provisions of (1) of this subsection, if the participant re-establishes a 2.5 GPA (or above) and SAP within the final academic semester (before graduation), upon graduation, the participant's eligibility will be reinstated for employment incentive payments.

(4) Participants may obtain from the institution in which they are enrolled, an official letter reflecting a leave of absence or withdrawal when a serious illness, pregnancy, or other natural cause prevents the participant from continuing the coursework requirements or from fulfilling the provisions outlined under the eligibility requirements.

(A) College/ university withdrawals or leaves of absence may not exceed more than one academic year but will not be counted against the participant for the purposes of scholarship eligibility as long as the following criteria are met:

(B) Participants must present official college/university documentation to OSRHE at the time the withdrawal or leave of absence was granted which meets the requirements of this rule. Reapplication into the program must be received thirty (30) days prior to the participant resuming classes full-time or the participant may be withdrawn from the program.

610:25-41-8. Participant eligibility for employment incentive payments

(a) In order to qualify to receive the employment incentive disbursement benefits under the "Inspired to Teach" Program, program participants who are employed as traditionally prepared and certified teachers in Oklahoma public prekindergarten through 12th grade schools must:

(1) Prior to graduation, participate in the "Inspired to Teach" program and receive at least one scholarship award;

(2) Graduate from an accredited Oklahoma teacher preparation degree program;

(3) Obtain a traditional teacher certification and provide eligible full-time teaching service under a regular teaching contract at an Oklahoma public school in the area of certification or qualified subject area; and

(4) Begin the first year of eligible full-time teaching service, as described above, within thirteen (13) months from the date of graduation from a four-year institution in Oklahoma.

(b) Employment incentive payments may be awarded following each consecutive year of satisfactory service as documented by the employing school district for up to five (5) years of service to "Inspired to

Teach" program scholarship recipients upon graduation from an accredited Oklahoma teacher preparation degree program and traditional certification to teach in Oklahoma.

(c) The maximum amount of employment incentive payments for any qualified participant shall be Four Thousand Dollars (\$4,000) per year for up to five (5) years, not to exceed a total of Twenty Thousand Dollars (\$20,000) per participant.

(d) If sufficient funds are not available for employment incentive payment to qualified participants during any fiscal year, the Chancellor may make reductions in the payments made to qualified participants.

(e) Participants may apply to the employing school for a leave of absence when a serious illness, pregnancy, or other natural cause prevents the participant from providing consecutive full-time teaching service. Participants must present official school documentation to OSRHE that a leave of absence was granted which meets the requirements of this rule. Official notification must be given within one year that the teacher has resumed the teaching duties or participant may be withdrawn from the program.

(f) Leaves of absence may not exceed more than one academic year. Leaves of absence will not be included for the purpose of calculating the required consecutive five (5) years of teaching service.

(g) A Reduction in Force will not disqualify a participant based on the consecutive five-year obligation if the following requirements are met:

(1) Participant must provide to OSRHE official documentation of the Reduction in Force; and

(2) Participant must resume teaching at an Oklahoma public school within eighteen (18) months after the Reduction in Force.

610:25-41-9. Incentive benefits to be disbursed under the program

(a) Under the provisions of the "Inspired to Teach" program, OSRHE is authorized to make the employment incentive payments each year, up to five consecutive years for full-time teaching service, to Oklahoma public school districts for participants eligible pursuant to 610:25-41-8.

(b) An Employment Compliance Form must be submitted to OSRHE upon completion of each year of eligible teaching service. An authorized school official must complete the form.

(c) Each year, if all program requirements are satisfied, and contingent upon the availability of funds, OSRHE will issue disbursements of program benefits to school districts employing the qualifying participants for payment to participants.

(d) The total annual amount of employment incentive payments for any qualified participant shall not exceed Four Thousand Dollars (\$4,000).

(e) If OSRHE determines that any "Inspired to Teach" program disbursement was authorized based on misleading or incorrect information supplied by the participant, the participant must reimburse such payment to OSRHE.

610:25-41-10. Fiscal limitations of the program

(a) If insufficient funds are available for scholarship and/or employment incentive payments to qualified persons during any fiscal year, the Chancellor may make reductions in the payments made to those qualifying. [70 O.S. §698.1(F)].

(b) On or before June 30 of each year, the amount of employment incentive payments for all teachers eligible to receive payments for the upcoming school year will be determined. If in any given year funds are not available for employment incentive payments at the determined amount due to a reduction in employment incentive payments as determined by the Chancellor, the amount to be disbursed to all eligible participants will be reduced uniformly. Upon distribution of this reduced amount, the obligation of the program to those eligible teachers shall be satisfied for that academic year. The foregoing is true even if no funds are available for disbursement.

610:25-41-11. Verification and notification requirements

(a) Verification requirements which must be satisfied prior to disbursement of program benefits include:

- (1) A copy of the participant's traditional teaching certificate from the Oklahoma State Department of Education submitted to OSRHE. Additionally, a new copy of the traditional teaching certificate must be submitted for all new subsequent certification competencies or credentials;
- (2) A copy of the participant's official college or university transcript reflecting GPA, coursework, and graduation confirmation submitted to OSRHE; and
- (3) An Employment Compliance Form submitted to OSRHE after each year of eligible teaching service. An authorized school district official must complete the form including the participant's signature. This form must be notarized prior to submission to OSRHE.
- (b) The participant is responsible for ensuring that all documentation requested for verification requirements is provided within the time indicated.
- (c) Until all mutual obligations of the Participation Agreement are satisfied, the participant must respond to all communications and requests from OSRHE within the time indicated.
- (d) Until all mutual obligations of the Participation Agreement are satisfied, the participant must provide written notification to OSRHE of any change in legal name or address and of any change in status, which affects "Inspired to Teach" Program eligibility.